

Pacific Affairs

575 the Ko Lao Hui keeps the closest watch over government policy, especially where it considers its own interests to be concerned.

662 An illustration of how the Ko Lao Hui functions in this respect may be seen in the typical case of Huang Jun Chin, branch director in the village of Yuan Tung. To the people who live in it, Yuan Tung seems less a village than a country of which Huang is king. He owns some 400 acres of land and several thousand side arms which are borne by 3,000 men (all society members) directly under his command. In the county seat he and some of his men occupy a huge mansion fortified with machine-gun emplacements. Several close relatives hold important positions in the municipal and provincial governments. Although they are paid by the county government, two platoons of guards and policemen are armed with Huang's guns and are answerable to him alone. His men are also in the magistrate's office; in fact, the magistrate is no more than a figurehead whose function it is to transmit government orders to Huang and to await his instructions. The county administration takes no action without Huang's prior consent. He not only presides over the county council, but appoints all of its other members. Huang's case is typical of the power of the society which, though essentially non-political, frequently interferes with, and occasionally assumes direct control of, county government.¹²

575 Each branch of the society derives its regular income from a number of sources, of which opium dens are the most important. In one locality there are ten such dens, each run by a different high-ranking member. Each must contribute a definite sum to the branch, as must the semi-secret gambling houses and brothels. Illegal transactions in prohibited goods such as arms, gasoline and other vital war materials are effected under the supervision and protection of the society, which collects a fee on each transaction. Another source of income is the "market" where, though no goods are handled, such commodities as rape seed, rice and the like are bought and sold in wholesale quantities; since no goods are in evidence, the government agent, if he is present, sees nothing on which to levy a tax, but the society, keeping a com-

¹² Of course, the society manifests its power in other ways. For example, local coal mines and salt works cannot move their products to market until they have paid the society large sums on each shipment. Before making tours of inspection in the districts of the Chengtu Plain, government officials are expected to notify, and to secure the protection of, Ko Lao Hui officials. This procedure is necessary because bandits, county guards and administrators are usually all members of the society.

The Ko Lao Hui in Szechuan

plete record of transactions, collects a tax in place of the government.¹³ In addition, the Ko Lao Hui controls many inland communications in the sense that it operates chains of control points similar to customs houses at which merchants and other travelers are stopped for contributions.

Other, irregular sources of income are more difficult to assess. Most big stores within the territory of a branch must present gifts, in cash or in kind, either to the director or to the branch, several times each year. The amount of the contribution depends on the size of the store. Special collections occur frequently and may affect not only businessmen but also landowners, who pay a certain amount on each acre. Although stealing, robbery and kidnapping are not openly encouraged by most branches, members who have committed such crimes usually go to their director and present the branch with a large portion of their gains in return for its protection. (One can usually regain a "lost" article if one knows the right person in the branch to turn to.) Some leaders of the Ko Lao Hui capitalize on the power of the society for private and selfish ends at the expense of non-members, or even of other members, but a portion of their profits are invariably devoted to the needs of the society.¹⁴

ONE OF THE most interesting aspects of the Ko Lao Hui in Szechuan concerns the changes in its forms and activities which have taken place in recent years. Shifts in the needs and interests of communities in which the Ko Lao Hui exists have brought about changes in the motivation and spirit of the society. For example, patriotism—specifically, opposition to the Ch'ing rulers—is thought to have been the main motive for the original establishment of the Ko Lao Hui. But since the disappearance of the Ch'ings as rulers and of the Manchus as a

¹³ At one such "market" in 1945 the society branch collected CNC\$300 on each *tan* (133 pounds) of rice sold. On an average day 300 *tan* might change hands, resulting in a rake-off, on rice sales alone, of some CNC\$60,000. There are eight or nine "market" days each month.

¹⁴ An illustration of how the society looks after its own was afforded by an incident which recently occurred one morning six miles outside of Chengtu. Three cotton dealers, carrying a huge sum of money, were set upon by three highwaymen (Ko Lao Hui members acting on instructions from one of their leaders). A company of road guards, chancing to come upon the scene just after the robbers had secured their loot, started a gun fight which lasted several hours and resulted in the wounding of several guards and the death of two guards and two of the robbers. The surviving robber escaped with the money, all of which was later set aside for the future welfare of the families of the two dead members.

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three and sometimes four crops a year. It is estimated that the annual output of farm products alone include rice, 15,000,000 piculs; wheat, 8,000,000 piculs; other cereals, 2,000,000 piculs; rape seed, 500,000 piculs; tobacco, 700,000 piculs; plus medicinal herbs, vegetables, and other farm products. The total value of all these products at pre-war prices was a little over 180,000,000 dollars, or 45 dollars per capita for the Plain. This production represents about 15 per cent of the total volume of agricultural produce of the whole province, while the area of the Plain is only about one-sixty-seventh of the total area of the province. In other words, the Chengtu Plain produces ten times as much per unit area than the rest of the Basin.

e) Farms and fields.--Among the farm areas of the Basin, Chengtu Plain has the largest average farm. According to a survey by Professor Brown and M. L. Li, the rented farms average 30.1 mow, and the owned farms average 73.1 mow.¹ These figures are almost twice as large as the average size of farms in the Basin as a whole.² They are, in fact, even larger than the largest average size of farm in North China.³ This, of course, means additional wealth and more prosperity. This undoubtedly has accounted for the large farmstead and the well-kept farms throughout the Plain (Fig. 12). Moreover, unlike other parts of the Basin, most of the farms here are not so detached. In general, the individual fields of Chengtu Plain farms are larger. According to the same survey, the average field is 3.36 mow,⁴ which is three times as large as that of the hilly areas in the Basin.⁵ Larger fields are made possible, of course, by the flatter topography and better water-supply here.

f) Marketing of agricultural products.--The marketing of the diverse agricultural products of the Plain is interesting. Marketing is done mainly in the nearby towns or cities throughout the year. The Plain is dotted with market towns, so that all

¹H. D. Brown and M. L. Li, "A Survey of Fifty Farms on the Chengtu Plain," Chinese Econ. Journal, I (1927), 1-59.

²Ibid.

³Buck, op. cit., p. 273.

⁴Brown and Li, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵H. D. Brown and M. L. Li, "A Survey of Farms of Mountain Gnei Areas," Chinese Econ. Journal, I (1927), 1059-76.

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437 farms here are within a few miles of a market. Each town has usually three or four market days per week, which alternate with those of the neighboring towns. The larger places have a daily market. The produce is usually carried on men's backs on shoulder poles, or loaded on wheelbarrows. The noise of the wheelbarrows on the stone-paved roads in the quiet of the early morning is as genuinely Chengtu Plain as many of its other unique landscape features. This peculiar noise, together with that much-advertised smell of night soil in the oriental farm fields, adds another unique double feature to the already too-colorful Chengtu-Plain landscape.

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489 Moreover, in spite of the obstruction of irrigation dams, the extensive inter-communicating canal systems in the Plain help provide channels by way of which many of the villagers in the Plain can send their produce (such as vegetables, fruits, poultry, pork, and other products) to the city or to other towns by boat. And at the same time they bring home their purchases by the same conveyance. The canals thus facilitate considerably the otherwise very difficult transportation conditions. Here reminds one of the similar scene, though on a much smaller scale, which is commonly seen in the Great-Lake Canal regions (such as the Wu-zhih and Soochow areas) of the Lower Yangtse Delta.

226 g) Practice of aquiculture.--Because there are thousands of acres of ponds and water-covered paddy fields in Chengtu Plain, aquiculture is also practiced here. The principal activity along this line is fishing--for fish, frogs, snails, and crabs. Cormorant fishing is particularly characteristic. Because the Min River and other streams in this area are fairly clear during some months of the year, the fish can be easily seen as they hurry upstream to spawn. Thus, the cormorant catch is generally very successful here. Other phases of aquiculture include digging for aquatic plants, such as lotus seeds, water chestnuts (*Trapa natus*), and *Calladum*, which are all delicacies to the people here.

162 Chengtu Plain occupies an area of approximately 6,000 square kilometers, about one-twenty-fifth of the total area of the Basin proper, as delimited in the present study. But it has a population of more than 4,000,000 people, or about one-twelfth of the total population of the province. The average population density of Chengtu Plain is a little over 700 persons per square kilometer, or nearly 1,800 persons per square mile. Nowhere in

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796 the motley crowd. Schnapps put a crown on the day and soon the valley resounded with singing and shouting. The dancing and singing continued from the end of the performance until far into the night and youth and maiden had their day. What Fan tse does not know something about flirting?

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563 Bo lo tse were also to be seen at the performance in the monastery. However, everybody looked askance at them for the visitors and all the people from the monastery were Hsi fan, genuine Tibetans from the Scharba tribe. Many of them were ill at ease at the appearance of these simply-dressed people. Involuntarily the women said: "Watch out, there are Bo lo tse over there," and when one of the audience lost track of his horse, suspicion was immediately aroused: "the Bo lo tse have stolen it."

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• 437 804 While I was shopping in Sung pan ting for my further journey I came across a Szechwan arrangement that I had never before encountered in China. Whenever I wanted to pay in silver for something in a shop and we had come to an agreement about the price, the merchant asked me to go with him to the kwan ping to weigh the silver. In a low shop on the main street an elderly gentleman sat in front of large iron scales for weighing silver. Thoughtfully and with an air of importance he examined through the large round lenses of his horn spectacles piece after piece of silver which the by-standers passed him. Then he weighed them and with his long-nailed fingers made out a certificate concerning weight and validity, for a small percentage of the value. If one stops to think that in the entire commercial city of Sung pan ting this was the only man in possession of an official license to weight silver, that no other set of scales was regarded as authentic, that everyone who paid in silver hastened to the kwan ping, then one realizes the importance of this position and its profitableness. The owner of the scales had to buy his license for a lump sum from the ting. But the people were so used to the procedure that not only the uncoined silver but also the Szechwan silver dollars which had been introduced four years before by the kwan ping man, had to be tested for weight and value. The people regarded the arrangement as a benefit because they were thus protected from frequent fraud, from bad silver and bad scales.

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797 During my shopping I accidentally learned in one of the stores that there was another European beside myself staying in the city. A few days before Monseignor Dury, priest of the Missions Étrangères, had moved into the house belonging to his mission. When I called on him I found the extremely gracious Frenchman all alone with a